



October 2002

Work to start on Meadow and Bucktail Creeks this fall

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has decided to proceed this month with the Meadow Creek seep collection and the initial phase of the Bucktail Creek seep collection at the Blackbird Mine Site. The work will significantly reduce the amount of metals from the mine area getting into surface waters, and provide a head start on achieving water quality cleanup goals for the site. This work will be performed by the Blackbird Mine Site Group.

What work will be done?

Meadow Creek Seep Collection: The contaminated seeps in upper Meadow Creek will be collected and diverted to the 7100' dam for storage and then to the existing wastewater treatment plant for treatment and discharge. A new small diversion dam and clean water diversion ditch will be constructed to route clean water around the seep collection system. This work will improve water quality in Blackbird Creek and Panther Creek.

Initial phase of Bucktail Creek Seep Collection: Contaminated groundwater seepage below the 7000' dam that has not been addressed under previous Early Actions will be intercepted by a groundwater cutoff wall in Bucktail Creek (rather than a french drain as indicated in the Proposed Plan) and a discrete seep collection system. The seepage will be routed by gravity to the existing Bucktail Creek pump-back station, pumped to the 6930' adit, then routed through the mine to the existing wastewater treatment plant. This initial phase of seepage collection will be performed below the 7000' dam but above the existing Bucktail Creek pump-back station.

Work will be conducted as "Early Action" to final cleanup

In recent years, certain time-critical work has been completed in advance of EPA's Proposed Plan for final site cleanup (*see sidebox*). This work is referred to as *Early Actions*. The Proposed Plan discusses the seep collection work described above as a possible Early Action. EPA has decided to move ahead with the work as an Early Action instead of waiting until after selection of the final cleanup remedy later this year. This decision will allow the seep collection work to happen this year instead of next spring.

Blackbird Mine Proposed Plan

The Proposed Plan is a summary of all the cleanup alternatives considered and evaluated for the Blackbird Mine Site. The Plan describes EPA's Preferred Alternative for addressing contaminated surface water, groundwater, sediments and mine tailings deposited along the banks of creeks (overbank deposits). The Proposed Plan was available for public comment from August 12 through October 10, 2002.

EPA will now evaluate comments and make its final decisions on remaining cleanup actions. A Record of Decision is scheduled to be published in November.

If you would like a copy of the plan, please contact one of the EPA staff listed on the back of this fact sheet, or visit our website at www.epa.gov/r10earth.

Site History

Blackbird Mine is an inactive mine located approximately 20 miles west of the town of Salmon in east central Idaho (Lemhi County). Cobalt, silver and copper ore were extracted from underground and open pit mining operations. The mining operations left an open pit (Bucktail Pit), several miles of underground workings, waste rock piles and a tailings disposal impoundment.

Contaminated soil, sediments and tailings were released from the Blackbird Mine site during high water flows from thunderstorms and snowmelt. The environmental concerns are the releases of cobalt, copper, iron and arsenic into Blackbird, Big Deer, South Fork of Big Deer and Panther Creeks.

In May of 1993, EPA proposed the site for placement on its National Priorities List (NPL) for further investigation and cleanup under Superfund authority. EPA reached agreement with Potentially Responsible Parties (PRPs) to investigate the contamination and evaluate the cleanup options. The PRPs, referred to as the Blackbird Mine Site Group, are Noranda Mining Inc., M.A. Hanna Co. and Intalco Corporation (formerly Alumet Corporation). The work by _____ d under EPA oversight, and in Idaho, U.S. Forest Service, and _____ eric Administration.

For more information:

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Blackbird Mine